

Poinsettias are heavy fertilizer feeders. Fertilize with a soluble fertilizer when irrigating, or use a three-month slow-release fertilizer to supply nutrients on a continual basis. Maintain adequate moisture during the summer.

It is very important to maintain 14 hours of continuous darkness starting between September 15 and October 1 to “force” a poinsettia to flower by the holiday season. Prevent any stray light from reaching poinsettias after sundown. The natural day length in Louisiana allows poinsettias to flower on time for the holiday, but interruption of the dark period by flashlight, car lights, flood lights, porch lights, etc. must be avoided. This interruption will delay flowering.

If poinsettias are planted in your landscape (this is recommended only in extreme south Louisiana), provide protection from temperatures below 40 degrees F. It's important to protect the root system and lower stem during cold periods to ensure the plant will return next year.



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Poinsettia

Care and Selection




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Poinsettias (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*), the leading floricultural crop in the United States since the mid-1980s, are one of the primary trademarks of the Christmas season. These plants were first introduced to the United States from their native Mexico by our U.S. Ambassador Joel Poinsett in the mid-1800s. They soon were being evaluated by botanists across the country and quickly became a holiday tradition.

Plant Selection

Poinsettias are typically available at retail garden centers, florist shops, supermarkets and mass merchandisers starting in mid-November. Availability continues until Christmas. When purchasing poinsettias, consider these guidelines:

 -Observe the size and number of bracts (colored leaves). Expect to pay a higher price for florist quality poinsettias - plants with six or more bracts.

 -Inspect the lower green leaves. These should have good appearance and extend over the pot rim.

 -Check potential display life by examining the green flower parts in the center of the bracts. These are called cyathia. Plants with large cyathia having yellow pollen and



sap will have the least amount of display life and will not perform long indoors.

Varieties

Many poinsettia varieties are available. These varieties have bracts (colored leaves) available in shades of red, white, pink, marble and various combinations of these. The newer varieties were developed by plant breeders to offer more bracts per stem and a wider color range. Another benefit of the new varieties is the improved post-harvest longevity. Plants will last much longer in a home interior than previously grown varieties.

Placement and Care in the Home

The decorative effects of poinsettias far surpass those of other interior plants. Place the plant in a sunny location, if possible. Poinsettias do best if some direct light exposure is provided. Avoid dark home interiors and hallways.

Your poinsettias were raised in greenhouses having an average daytime temperature of 70 to 75 degrees F. Night temperature in a greenhouse where poinsettias are

grown is usually 62 to 65 degrees F. It's important to attempt maintaining these temperatures when poinsettias are in an interior setting.

Also provide high humidity. Modern heating and cooling systems decrease relative humidity in homes. Increase humidity around your poinsettias when possible. This can be done by placing the plant in a saucer of gravel and adding water to the gravel to provide humidity by way of evaporation. Be sure to keep the water level just below the bottom of the pot to prevent root rot problems.

Care After Christmas

Most poinsettias, even the newer varieties, will start fading and losing foliage by January. During this period, let the medium in the container dry (but not to the point that the stem starts to shrivel). Allow the plant to remain in a warm area. It will slowly become semi-dormant. By March or April, poinsettias can either be repotted and placed outdoors or planted directly into a landscape bed. At repotting or planting outdoors, cut the stem back to about 4 to 6 inches above the medium level.

After you have repotted the plant, new growth should begin in two to three weeks. After every 4 to 6 inches of new growth, pinch the terminal growing point of each branch (stem) to encourage lateral branching and reduce plant height. Do not pinch after September 1.